

Digital 395 Middle Mile Right-of-Way Project

Draft Finding of No Significant Impact

DOI-BLM-NV-C020-2011-0509-EA

August 2011



Background

The California Broadband Cooperative Inc. has proposed the Digital 395 Middle Mile Project (Project). The network would be located between Barstow, California and Reno, Nevada providing broadband services to the Eastern Sierra. The route primarily follows U.S. Highway 395. The service area includes 36 communities, seven Indian Reservations and two military installations. The new infrastructure would provide broadband access to: unserved and underserved communities; schools, libraries, community colleges; public safety agencies and healthcare providers. The Project is a part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and would create jobs and stimulate the economy.

The Project would include the following features:

- construct a new approximately 479 mile backbone fiber route;
- construct approximately 62 miles of new distribution lines;
- place approximately 52 miles of fiber in existing utility conduits; and
- construct 16 nodes or prefabricated buildings to support wireless systems.

Land Use Plan Conformance

This project is in conformance with the Carson City Field Office Consolidated Resource Management Plan (2001). Sections that specifically apply to the Proposed Action include:

- LND-7, Administrative Actions #6: “Exchanges and minor non-Bureau initiated realty proposals considered where the analysis indicates they are beneficial to the public.”
- ROW-4, Administrative Actions #3: “...applicants for right-of-way grants...are subject to standard approval procedures outlined in the right-of-way regulations (43 CFR 2800).”

Finding

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts in the Environmental Assessment for the *Digital 395 Middle Mile Right-of-Way Project Environmental Assessment* (EA), DOI-BLM-NV-C020-2011-0509-EA, I have preliminarily determined that the Proposed Action would not have a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, the preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS) is not required for compliance with the National Environmental Policy of 1969 (NEPA).

Context:

The project area is located in the Eastern Sierra of California and Nevada. The project would span 593 miles and include San Bernardino, Kern, Inyo, and Mono Counties in California, and Douglas, Carson City, and Washoe Counties in Nevada. Fiber optic lines would be installed overhead and underground, primarily along U.S. Highway 395. The portion of the project area that crosses SFFO-managed lands is for approximately three miles along U.S. Highway 395 in Douglas County, Nevada and along existing roads in Carson City, Nevada. The highway and road corridors are highly disturbed and overhead and underground utility lines are common. In addition, fiber would be installed in existing utility conduit on approximately five miles of public land in Carson City, Nevada and Washoe County, Nevada.

Intensity:*1) Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.*

The installation of new broadband fiber in the Eastern Sierra would benefit underserved and unserved communities. Minor temporary impacts would occur along the U.S. Highway 395 and road corridors during installation of underground and overhead fiber lines. The corridors are highly disturbed and overhead and underground utility lines are common.

2) The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

The Proposed Action would have no effect on public health or safety on SFFO-managed lands. Providing broadband served to unserved and underserved areas of the Eastern Sierra in Nevada and California will benefit the public, government facilities including primary and secondary education, healthcare facilities and military installations.

3) Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

No wetlands, park lands, prime or unique farmlands, wild and scenic rivers, ecological critical areas, or Areas of Critical Environmental Concern on SFFO-managed lands would be affected by the Proposed Action. Historic and prehistoric cultural resources on SFFO-managed lands would be inventoried and protected by avoidance or modification of the treatments as needed.

4) The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

The portion of the project area on SFFO-managed lands is along highway and road corridors; the project area on SFFO-managed lands is highly disturbed, and overhead and underground utility lines are common.

5) The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

The construction of overhead and underground utility lines on SFFO-managed lands is a well understood activity. Overhead and underground utility lines already exist along the highway and road corridors. There are no uncertain or unknown risks.

6) The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

The Proposed Action would not establish a precedent for future actions on SFFO-managed lands. Any future proposals to manage vegetation on BLM-managed lands would require project-specific NEPA analysis.

7) Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

The Proposed Action on SFFO-managed lands is not related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

8) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the NRHP or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.*

NTIA is the lead federal agency for compliance with the NHPA. In accordance with the MOU signed between the BLM and NTIA, binding guidance for avoiding adverse effects to NHPA-eligible properties on SFFO-managed lands would be addressed in the Programmatic Agreement which would be signed by all parties prior to the SFFO issuing its final FONSI and Decision Record.

9) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the ESA of 1973.*

The Proposed Action will have no effect on any federally listed species or their critical habitat on SFFO-managed lands.

10) *Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.*

The Proposed Action is in conformance with the CRMP. The Proposed Action would not violate or threaten to violate any federal, State, or local law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

Linda J. Kelly
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Date